

Mendip Hills
National
Landscape



Champion Species Fact Sheet

Common Adder
Vipera berus



mendiphills-nl.org.uk/caring/nature-recovery-plan

Why a Champion Species?

- Huge decline in numbers but Mendip is still a stronghold.
- S41 Threatened and UK Protected Species.
- An indicator of healthy habitat: as a predator, they need the right habitat and the availability of prey species. Young adders often eat common lizards with adults more commonly eating small rodents, chicks, and other reptiles.

Preferred habitat

- Heathlands.
- Less intensively managed grasslands.
- Dry stone walls



Best time to see

- During the 'lying out' period in early spring, from as early as February through to May, close to their hibernaculum. It is important not to disturb them.
- Late autumn at their hibernaculum sites, as they prepare to hibernate.

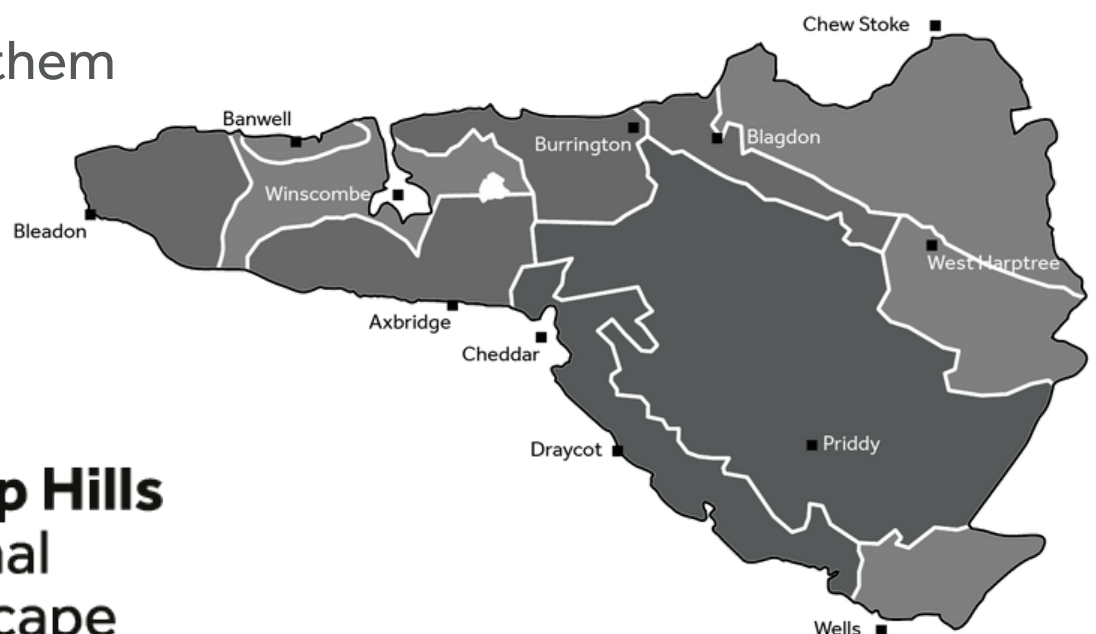
Points of interest

- Heliothermic, meaning they absorb the heat of the sun directly by basking in sunny spots. The dark zigzag patterning assists in this process and on Mendip there are a high percentage of melanistic examples (this means black/dark blue).
- UK's only venomous reptile.
- Give birth to live young (viviparous, a trait they share with the common lizard), an adaptation for our colder climate. The females produce eggs but keep them inside their body until the young hatch.

Key threats

- Loss and fragmentation of habitat through development and intensive agriculture.
- Disturbance during the lying out period by people and dogs off leads.
- Persecution: many people have a negative perception of this species as they are venomous.

Where to find them



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